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The attached report on Korean labor experience in the Okhotsk area of the USSR is being sent to you for your retention in the belief that it may be of interest.

Attachment: Report on Korean labor experience in the Okhotsk area.

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A group of approximately 300 Koreans volunteered for labor in the USSR in July 1948. They left Chongjin on a Soviet vessel on 20 July 1948, arriving at Okhotsk (143-18, 59-23) on 10 August 1948, having spent one night at Vladivostok en route. Immediately upon arrival in Okhotsk the group were assigned to work in Kuzderiske Plant in Fishing District 16.¹ One hundred members of this group returned to Chongjin in December 1949, traveling via Korsakoy (formerly Odomari), Sakhalin, where they were detained five days for investigation, physical checks, and customs clearances.

2. Among the Korean laborers were 20 members of the North Korean Labor Party and 70 members of the Youth Alliance. After their arrival in the USSR, monthly Youth Alliance meetings were held, but attendance was not compulsory. Ten members of the group became members of the Communist Party during their sojourn in the USSR, although no pressure was exerted upon them to do so. Most Communist propaganda speeches to the Koreans were directed towards increasing production and were without political import.
3. During early August 1948, a Soviet ship with 7,000 Korean employees left Chongjin for an unknown destination. The vessel was detained at Nagadan because of an epidemic, type unknown, among the Koreans. During 1948, approximately 200,000 North Korean laborers were shipped from Chongjin, Wonsan, and Hungnam to the USSR, mostly by ship via Vladivostok to Kamchatka.
4. There was no other Koreans in Kuzderiske than the laborers except for three employed in administrative work for the group, and the political officer of the 16 District. This individual, named Andrei KIM, had lived in Kazakhstan; he visited Kuzderiske in early December 1949 and made a speech to the Koreans there, informing them that he would take care of all Korean nationals in the area. KIM also distributed a North Korean newspaper every ten days. There was supposed to be a Korean political officer in each of the 54 fishing districts.² Two or three times a month, the Koreans were ordered to listen to special broadcasts from Pyongyang.

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5. Korean workers at Okhotsk were permitted to go into town after working hours, and there was no curfew. It was not necessary for workers to have special passes or to show identification unless there was some sort of disturbance. Their assignment was to clean and pack fish. During the winter months, however, when the water froze, they were sent to the mountains to cut wood to make boxes for shipping the fish. Some 40 of them were sent to Transinga about 50 miles north of Okhotsk, to work as "volunteer" woodcutters.

6. The Koreans each received as wages, before their departure from Korea, 1200 North Korean won, 300 kilograms of rice, one pair of shoes, and a military uniform. They were promised 300 rubles more upon the completion of eight months' work. Upon their arrival in the USSR, however, 370 rubles was deducted from their wages as payment for clothing, and an additional 300 rubles as payment for rice. Since some of the party had not enough rubles to make such payments, they extended their service in the USSR. When departing after a year and a half, the worker might have as much as 5,000 North Korean won.

7. Kuzderiske is the main plant for the 16 Fishing District and receives about 20 vessels a month in its harbor. These craft, all Soviet, bring in wheat flour, canned goods (occasionally of American manufacture), and sugar, and take out fish. During the months from December to March there is little traffic, mostly of Soviet and Korean workers returning to their home ports of Vladivostok and Chongjin.

10. The population of Okhotsk, in addition to the Korean laborers and the Soviet natives, includes many Tatars (about four percent of the population). They are all fishermen and own their own small craft. About two percent of the population are Yedins⁶, who resemble Koreans. They are fishermen but do not own their own boats and in the winter cut firewood and lumber in the nearby forests and bring it to the port on sleds. There are no Mongols or Japanese in the town.

11. Until January 1949, rationing was enforced in Okhotsk, but after that date everything could be bought freely. Meat, butter, and American and Canadian canned goods were very plentiful, but fresh fruit, medicines, and vegetables were hard to obtain. Fishing nets were imported from Dairen, salt, packed in straw sacks, from North Korea. There were many cheap cigarettes. Prices in December 1949 were four rubles for a kilogram of wheat flour, eight rubles for the best brand of cigarettes, three or four rubles for ordinary cigarettes, and 300 rubles for a jacket and trousers. There was a black market which was run primarily in meat, fish, and milk. Prices were strictly controlled by the government.

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1. [REDACTED] Comment: This is apparently in Okhotsk. The name of the plant was given variously, in English, as Kakduriske, Kukderiske, and Kuzderinke. It is probably Kuzderentski Rybokolkhoz (Kuzderentski Fish Collective).

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2. [REDACTED] Comment: A Soviet map of Primorski Krai indicates the existence of numbered fishing districts but no exact boundaries are shown.

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3. [REDACTED] Comment: North Korean won in 1949 were approximately 14 to the ruble. The ruble was arbitrarily set at 4 to the US dollar.

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6. [REDACTED] Comment: This name is apparently source's rendition of Yakuti, a local tribe.

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7. [REDACTED] Comment: This may be Zolotoi ("golden") District.

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Luxury items such as perfumes and pastry were available in plenty but only through government sales.

12. In Fishing District 13, American sugar was rationed. In April 1949, a Korean fishing employee who was standing in line to collect his ration, was stabbed by a Soviet (no details given). The Soviet was imprisoned.
13. Magadan, a ten-day voyage by sea from Okhotsk, has a naval base and an air-strip. Battleships, cruisers, and destroyers were reported in the harbor. Japanese PWs were kept in Magadan, employed as dock workers, stevedores, and in similar jobs. Those who were seen by travelers in the area appeared healthy and content. About 1,000 were observed, in platoons, each platoon guarded by two Soviets. It was stated in Magadan that many Japanese war prisoners were working in a coal mine about four miles northeast of the town.
14. In December 1949, the Okhotsk airstrip, about a mile north of Okhotsk, was a restricted area. Planes observed on the field at that time included 30 twin-engine planes, apparently heavy bombers, with plastic noses, nacelles protruding slightly in the rear, and three-bladed propellers; a mail plane from Khabarovsk; and a number of seaplanes resembling Catalina PBYS. Seven or eight of these last were seen daily. Over 60 emplacements for anti-aircraft guns located around the strip were built of concrete and covered with earth and sod, but no guns had been installed and the emplacements were not guarded. Similar gun emplacements were visible all around Okhotsk and along the road to Amerikanka.
15. About 30 miles north of Singa,⁷ there is a gold and platinum mining area which was restricted, and which foreigners were not allowed to enter. On the basis of the large quantities of foodstuff sent there by dogsled during the winter months, it was estimated that the gold mine employed several thousand workers. Residents of this area were allowed to visit other areas freely.
16. Personnel identified in the Okhotsk area included:
 - a. Andrei KIM (金オクシム), a Soviet citizen of Korean origin, political officer, Fishing District 16; age about 40; married, with one son and one daughter; described as 5 feet 6 inches tall, slight build, big round eyes, dark complexion, and gold-filled teeth.
 - b. Uli Pyong-ho (尹東浩), Korean interpreter for Fishing District 16; age about 29; very tall, slender, and of athletic build, with a long face and a very dark complexion; single; boxing champion; Korean nationality but looking like a Soviet.
 - c. Nikolai Fedor, ⁸ Soviet, supervisor of Fishing District 16; age 35; married; tall and fat, with a big nose and fair complexion; mustache.
 - d. KIM Kwan-ho (金權浩), North Korean worker at Chongjin, speaking fluent Russian; age 21; short, boyish looking, with soft skin and a sallow complexion; single.
17. The fishing plant in Fishing District 35 was built by Japanese about 1935 and still employs Japanese workers. Two Japanese names appearing on official documents were SHIBORORA and MITSUBISHI. The plant is a restricted area.
18. Soviet workers from Siberia in Okhotsk could return home upon completion of their employment contracts without special permission. The factory in which

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they were employed issued a statement that they had fulfilled their contracts, and they could then return home via Vladivostok.

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